



Frequently Asked Questions

Regarding Proposed Changes to the 2008 Recreational Groundfish Regulations North of Point Arena

California's recreational fishery is allocated harvest limits, or quotas, of a given species or group of species of fish by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC). For yelloweye rockfish, the estimated catch through August 10 combined with the projected catch for the remainder of the year exceeds the 2.1 metric ton harvest limit. Closure of the Northern Management Area (NMA) and North-Central Management Area North of Point Arena (NCNMA) on Sept. 2, 2008 is necessary to prevent the projected catch from exceeding the harvest limit. The California Recreational Fisheries Survey (CRFS) collected the data used in making catch estimates and projections.

Q: Why was the projected catch for yelloweye rockfish higher than expected?

A: The original 2008 season was set based on catch data from recent previous years. The 2008 yelloweye rockfish catch has proved to be higher than projected.

Q: Why is there so much concern for yelloweye rockfish?

A: Yelloweye rockfish were designated as an "overfished" stock (currently at <25% of their unfished population). Their take is currently prohibited to allow stocks to rebuild in the shortest time possible. This species is late-maturing (estimated at 22 yrs of age), slow-growing and long-lived (can live up to 118 years old); thus their populations grow at a slow rate and recovery will take many years. Yelloweye rockfish stocks may not be rebuilt until 2074. Allowing anglers to fish for healthy stocks which co-occur with yelloweye rockfish results in some bycatch of yelloweye rockfish, and this bycatch is projected to exceed the allowable harvest limit.

Q: How can the 2008 recreational catch for yelloweye rockfish exceed the harvest limit if anglers are not allowed to keep them?

A: Fishery managers are required to account for total mortality for all catch, including kept and discarded fish. Although yelloweye rockfish are prohibited, CRFS samplers record fish that anglers bring to the dock as well as fish reported caught and released. The total catch mortality is determined from the observed and reported catch combined with CRFS estimates of fishing effort.

Q: How many boat-based anglers were sampled in the Northern and North-Central Management Areas to produce the catch estimates for May and June?

A: During the open months of the rockfish season, 1,532 boat anglers were sampled in the NMA (May-June) and 2,462 boat anglers were sampled in the NCNMA (June), from which catch estimates were produced. Catch estimates were produced based on information from these sampled anglers.

Q: Could anglers be misidentifying other species of fish as yelloweye rockfish, resulting in an inflation of the mortality estimates?

A: Yelloweye rockfish are more common north of Point Arena and as such, are examined by samplers and reported as discards by anglers more frequently than to the south where they are less common. Because the specific locations of reported catches are largely consistent with catch locations actually observed by samplers, it is unlikely that the angler reports of discarded fish are producing inflated mortality estimates. To prevent misidentification of other species as yelloweye rockfish, a yelloweye rockfish, canary rockfish and vermilion rockfish identification flyer has been widely distributed by the Department in the 2008 season and a printable version can be found at: www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/pdfs/canary_id.pdf.

Q: What estimated percentage of yelloweye rockfish catch originated from each groundfish management area?

A: In total, 84% of the sampled catch of yelloweye rockfish through August 10 originated north of Point Arena, while 16% occurred to the south.

Management Area	Percentage of Sampled Catch
North	32%
North-Central (north of Point Arena)	52%
North-Central (south of Point Arena)	12%
Monterey South-Central	4%
Morro Bay South-Central	0%
South	0%

Q: What can anglers do to contribute to the recovery of this species?

A: Anglers wishing to help minimize mortality of yelloweye and other overfished rockfish species should follow these suggestions:

- If you encounter prohibited species such as yelloweye rockfish, move to a different fishing spot to reduce the number of fish that are caught and which may not survive after being thrown back.
- To help fish get back down to depth and reduce mortality due to gas expansion injuries, many anglers now use an inverted, weighted plastic crate with a rope attached to the bottom, or a weighted inverted barbless hook, or a commercially available fish descending device. For more information on gas expansion injuries and proper release of fish please go to: www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/releasing.pdf.
- **Know your rockfish and report all catch of this species to CRFS samplers.** Under-reporting of catch will prevent stock assessment scientists from determining if populations have recovered. Over-reporting may result in unnecessary action to close the fishery. Please report exactly what you caught to the best of your ability and ask the CRFS sampler to show you identification materials if you are unsure.

Q: What other saltwater fishing opportunities will be available for boat-based anglers north of Point Arena after the proposed Sept. 2 recreational groundfish closure?

A: Anglers can still target and retain leopard shark in Humboldt Bay, halibut, surfperch, striped bass, albacore and sanddabs.